

Federal agent heightens firm's security service

By Barbara Leonard
August 3, 2006

Job: William Hackenson -- vice president of security at Fortress Global Investigations, a Manhattan-based international investigations and security firm.

The Plan: Beef up Fortress Global's security services, focusing on IT threats and electronic surveillance. Mr. Hackenson says the firm is internationally recognized for its strong investigations, but its security side is not as strong -- a problem he hopes to fix. "You name it. When it comes to technical security, I did it [and] I trained in it," Mr. Hackenson says. Fortress Global President Robert Seiden says that with the threat of natural disasters and global terrorism, Fortune 500 companies are looking to the security industry for emergency preparedness and contingency planning. "[CEOs and stockholders] want to make sure that if another problem happens like in New Orleans or a 9/11 situation, it doesn't shut their company down," Mr. Seiden says.

Track Record: With 32 years in federal security agencies, Mr. Hackenson fits right in at Fortress Global, which is staffed primarily by former federal investigators and lawyers. After 26 years in the Secret Service, Mr. Hackenson says the constant travel and stress of the job wore him out. "When you get into your 40s and 50s, it's time to yield to the younger staff," he says. Mr. Hackenson parlayed his expertise into a job with the Office of Inspector General, where he led security assessments for another six years.

Obstacles: Fortress Global must continuously upgrade its services to combat new security risks and competition. "Business leaders are aware of the threat and have to do a little more than what is reasonable and prudent to meet it," Mr. Hackenson says, adding that fieldwork is vital. "You can't shoot from the hip here -- you've got to look at the site," he says.

Vitals: Bachelor's in criminal justice from Westfield State College in Massachusetts in 1973 and a master's in management from National-Louis University in Detroit in 1992. He worked as a special agent and inspector at the Secret Service from 1974 to 2000. The agency sent him to numerous technical schools, giving him expertise in everything from weapons and emergency medicine to Otis elevators and fire. He left the agency's technical security division in 2000 to join the Office of Inspector General at the National Reconnaissance Office as an inspector. Mr. Hackenson, 55, plans to move to New Jersey with his family, but is currently living in Virginia.